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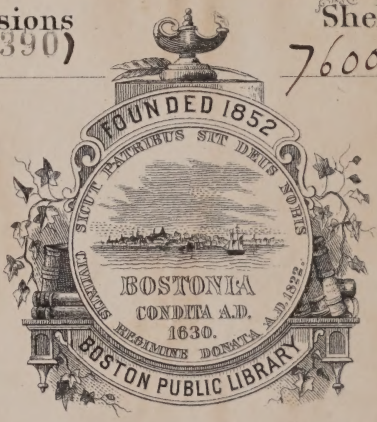

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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

REQUEST FOR COÖPERATION.

ISSUED BY THE COUNCIL.

5 BOYLSTON PLACE, May, 1887.

THE object of the Society is described in the first article of its Constitution as "the systematic study of the laws of mental action." The results which the American Society has so far achieved have not been so great as anticipated, and the Council thinks it desirable to circulate a brief account of the lines of research now being investigated by the various committees, and to make an appeal for a more zealous coöperation of the members and associates of the Society. One form which this coöperation of our members might profitably take, is the distribution of this *Request* among their friends, with a view to the acquirement of new members, and to the arousing of fresh interest in the investigation.

The American Society was constituted at the end of 1884, for the purpose of making an exact study of that border-land of human experience, to the investigation of which the efforts of an English Society had already been devoted, and in which that Society claimed to have achieved some positive progress. The objects of the English Society have been described as follows: —

The Society for Psychical Research was formed at the beginning of 1882, for the purpose of making an organized and systematic attempt to investigate various sorts of debatable phenomena which are *primâ facie* inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis. From the recorded testimony of many competent witnesses, past and present, including observations recently made by scientific men of eminence in various countries, there appears to be, amidst much illusion and deception, an important body of facts to which this description would apply, and which, therefore, if incontestably established, would be of the very highest interest. The task of examining such residual phenomena has often been undertaken by individual effort, but never hitherto by a scientific society organized on a sufficiently broad basis. The following are the principal departments of work which it is proposed to undertake: —

1. An examination of the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, otherwise than through the recognized sensory channels.

2. The study of hypnotism and mesmerism; and an inquiry into the alleged phenomena of clairvoyance.
3. An inquiry as to the existence of relations, hitherto unrecognized by science, between living organisms and magnetic and electric forces, and also between living and inanimate bodies.
4. A careful investigation of any reports, resting on strong testimony, of apparitions occurring at the moment of death or otherwise, and of disturbances in houses reputed to be haunted.
5. An inquiry into various alleged physical phenomena commonly called "spiritualistic."
6. The collection and collation of existing materials bearing on the history of these subjects.

The aim of the Society is to approach these various problems without prejudice or prepossession of any kind, and in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned inquiry which has enabled science to solve so many problems, once not less obscure nor less hotly debated. The founders of the Society have always fully recognized the exceptional difficulties which surround this branch of research; but they nevertheless believe that by patient and systematic effort some results of permanent value may be attained.

The research work of the American Society is at present divided between five committees: —

1. Committee on Thought-Transference.
2. Committee on Apparitions and Haunted Houses.
3. Committee on Hypnotism (Mesmerism).
4. Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena.
5. Committee on Experimental Psychology.

1. Committee on Thought-Transference.

The Committee for investigating the subject of Thought Transference,— that is, for ascertaining whether "a vivid impression or a distinct idea in one mind can be communicated to another mind without the intervening help of the recognized organs of sensation," — is grateful for the response made by members of the Society to the circulars already issued; but desires to institute a new series of experiments, in the hope of obtaining a much wider coöperation in this branch of the Society's work.

From the returns received by the committee, it appeared that in at least two cases the results were such as to suggest the operation of thought-transference of the kind reported by the English Society; but in these cases, unfortunately, it became impossible to secure opportunities for a fuller investigation. The committee will be very glad to hear of any persons who are believed to be sensitive to thought-transference.

It has been asserted by Professor Charles Richet, of Paris, that experiments made in large numbers indicate the actuality of thought-transference, by showing that, when one person guesses in the presence of another person who knows what is to be guessed, the guesses are more often right than when neither of the two knows what is to be guessed Now, if, as has been maintained, there are persons who have the faculty of mind-reading to a high degree, it is possible that there are many persons who possess it to a slight degree. The statistics already collected by the committee, with the view of testing this, have not supported those obtained by Professor Richet; but the committee desires to test this yet further, by gathering a fresh series of statistics, and at the same time to stimulate the members and associates to new experiments among themselves and their friends for the purpose of discovering, if possible, any persons who are specially sensitive to thought-transference.

Explanations and suggestions are here given as to the manner of conducting the experiments.

The objects recommended for experiment are: —

I. — Playing-cards.
II. — Free drawings.
III. — Numbers, Words, Names.
IV. — Colors.

The person who guesses the object thought of, is called the *percipient;* the persons who think of the object are called *agents.* If successful results are obtained where more than one agent is engaged in the experiments, further trials should be made with each agent acting alone, for the purpose of ascertaining whether the impression produced upon the percipient is due to one agent rather than another. The persons engaged in the experiments should remain quiet and undisturbed. The agent should concentrate his attention as intensely as possible upon the object, upon which a good light should be thrown; the percipient should remain as passive as possible, his eyes covered with a dark bandage, attending only to any impression which he may appear to receive as it were from without.

The strain upon the agent's attention is considerable, if the experiments are properly made, and the percipient, as a rule, should not wait longer than two or three minutes before guessing the object. On the other hand, the percipient should not unduly hurry his guess. The series of experiments should not be continued after either experimenter is tired or otherwise unable to fix his mind on the work. Owing to the strenuous mental exertion required of the agent, the committee suggests that any particular series should rarely be prolonged after ten or twelve trials.

The experimenters should use every precaution to avoid the passage from agent to percipient, by the ordinary channels of sense, of any intimation, conscious or unconscious, of the object to be guessed. The general conditions of the experiments, such as the relative positions occupied by the agent and percipient, the date and duration of each series of trials, etc., should in every case be recorded. Some instances which have been reported suggest the advisability of first making experiments *with contact*, the agent placing his hand upon that of the percipient, and afterwards repeating the experiments *without contact*. Special care should be taken to record in each case whether the experiment has been made without contact or not.

All the observations (both successful and unsuccessful) made in any series should be sent in. The agent and percipient should both sign the record, not necessarily for publication, but as a pledge of their good faith. All series of experiments, positive or negative, are acceptable to the committee, one of whose objects is to ascertain whether thought-transference occurs with many persons, and, if so, to what degree and in what proportion.

The experimenters are requested to state their views concerning the exact nature of any impressions that may be produced, and also concerning the comparative success of experiments made at different times, in different moods, with one agent, or with several, with persons connected by blood or by any special sympathy. When the percipient feels a confidence in the correctness of certain of the guesses, this fact should be noted in each case, provided that it can be done before the result is verified. Any communication which may throw light upon the sensitiveness of the percipient, or upon any peculiarity in the mental activity of the agent, will be welcomed by the committee.

I. — Playing-Cards.

The agent holds a pack of playing-cards, shuffles it, says *Ready*, then cuts or opens the pack at random, and concentrates his attention upon the card thus disclosed, with the determination to impress the full appearance of the card upon the mind of the percipient. The card guessed by the percipient should be named aloud by him, and written down by the agent in a right-hand column, as in the following Form. The agent should then enter the true designation of the card in a left-hand column. The suits may be indicated by initial letters.

The agent should thoroughly shuffle the pack before each trial, so as to make the cutting a pure matter of chance. Care should be taken that the pack is complete. (It may be found advisable to withdraw the face-cards from the pack. Where this is done a statement should be made in the record to that effect.)

EXPERIMENTS IN THOUGHT-TRANSFERENCE.

PLAYING-CARDS.

Agent. — JOHN SMITH.
Percipient. — MARY SMITH (Sister of Agent).

MAY 6, 1887, 5 P.M. — 6.20 P.M.

Card selected.	*Card named.*
1. 10 of spades.	1. 9 of diamonds.
2. 5 of diamonds.	2. 5 of hearts.
3. 6 of hearts.	3. 10 of spades.
4. 8 of hearts.	4. 8 of clubs.
5. 4 of spades.	5. 3 of clubs.
6. 9 of clubs.	6. No impression after about four minutes.
7. 3 of spades.	7. 1 of diamonds.
8. 3 of clubs.	8. 4 of hearts.

(Rest for ten minutes.)

9. 3 of spades.	9. 10 of clubs.
10. 4 of spades.	10. 7 of spades.
11. King of diamonds.	11. 2 of clubs.

MAY 9, 1887, 9 P.M. — 9.35 P.M.

1. 3 of clubs.	1. 5 of spades.
2. 6 of spades.	2. 7 of spades.
3. 8 of hearts.	3. 8 — suit not seen.
4. 4 of hearts.	4. 4 of hearts.
5. 6 of hearts.	5. 6 of spades.
6. 3 of diamonds.	6. 1 — suit not seen.
7. 9 of diamonds.	7. 6 of hearts.

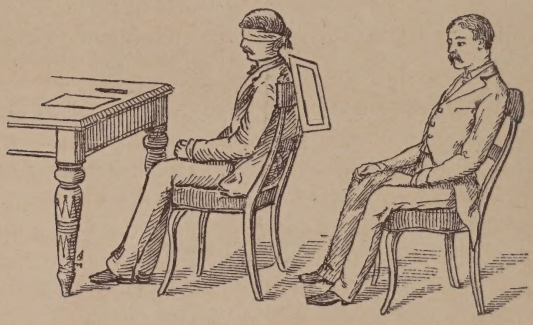
In the above experiments, the percipient was blindfolded and seated in a chair with her back to the agent, who sat about three feet behind the percipient. No contact in any case.

Signed, JOHN SMITH.
MARY SMITH.

II. — Free Drawings.

In these experiments, the agent makes any drawing he chooses, and the percipient, without knowing the drawing made by the agent, tries to make a reproduction of it on another sheet. The agent should avoid taking suggestions for his drawings from surrounding objects, or from objects which are specially likely to be present to the mind of the percipient. The percipient should not be allowed, while the agent is drawing, to see the motion of any part of the

pencil, or hear any sound from it. Similarly the agent should not see the reproduction made by the percipient until it is completed. Two rooms, if possible, should be used for the experiments. The percipient should be seated, blindfolded, in one room, while the agent is drawing a figure in another room. The agent should return with his drawing, enclosed in a book or folio, take his seat behind the percipient, say *ready*, and then open the drawing on a stand fixed for the purpose close behind the chair of the percipient,



as in the accompanying illustration. Silence should be maintained during the experiment. When the percipient announces that he is ready to draw, the agent should enclose the figure as before, and take it with him into the other room. The percipient should then remove the bandage, and make the reproduction, adding any notes concerning his impressions. The committee suggests that the drawings should be about two or three inches in size, and that the agent should draw his lines thickly with soft lead pencil, or, better still, black chalk pencil, on white paper or card, which should be placed against a dark background for the experiment. The sheets of diagrams should be numbered at the top after each experiment, as, Original 1, Reproduction 1, Original 2, Reproduction 2, etc.

III. — Numbers, Words, and Names.

These should be written clearly as in the *free-drawing* experiments, and guessed aloud by the percipient as in the *card* experiments. A record should be kept as in the *card* experiments.

IV. — Colors.

A set of six cards, *black*, *white*, *yellow*, *blue*, *red*, and *green*, may be obtained on application to the Secretary. Trials should be made as in the experiments with playing-cards, care being taken to shuffle the six cards after each trial.

The committee cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that *selected* results are not desired; the committee will be glad to receive any records even of a small series of experiments, whether successful or unsuccessful, on any of the lines indicated.

Records of experiments should be sent to the Secretary, Richard Hodgson, 5 Boylston place, Boston, Mass.

H. P. BOWDITCH,
Chairman.

2. Committee on Apparitions and Haunted Houses.

This committee wishes to collect accounts from trustworthy sources, of apparitions of absent or deceased persons, — of premonitions, whether these occur in dreams or in the waking state, by voices heard, or figures seen, or any kind of extraordinary experience, — and also of disturbances in houses described as "haunted." It is well known that, from time to time, there are related or published accounts of people who are said to have had such experiences, and to have learned, through them, about some otherwise unknown facts, afterwards verified; such, for instance, as death or illness or some other calamity which has actually happened, at or near the time of an apparition, to the distant person whose figure is said to have been seen. The committee will be especially glad to hear directly from the persons themselves, whether connected with the Society or not, who have had any such experiences, and strongly urges upon those who belong to the Society that they should render active assistance to the committee by collecting such accounts, and by obtaining such further information as will enable the committee to verify them in as much detail as possible by the accounts of other witnesses, the use of documents, or other collateral testimony. The names and addresses of the persons concerned should be appended to the accounts as a pledge of good faith; but these will be kept strictly private by the committee, unless special permission is given for their publication. Communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Richard Hodgson, 5 Boylston place, Boston, Mass.

JOSIAH ROYCE,
Chairman.

3. Committee on Hypnotism.

The work in which this committee is most interested concerns the causes and the psychical modifications of the various phases of hypnotic (mesmeric) trance, together with their physiological accompaniments. The committee is especially anxious to discover whether, as is commonly alleged in connection with hypnotic phenomena, there

may exist any possibility of thought-transference between the operator and his subject, and whether any cases can be obtained of what is termed *clairvoyance*, where the subject is said to show a knowledge of persons, or scenes, or hidden objects, in a way that seems to suggest the operation of some unusual power of perception. The committee begs the assistance of members and associates of the Society, and any other persons, in collecting accounts of such cases from reliable sources; but the committee is still more desirous of obtaining references to any persons who are either available at the present time for direct experiment, or are willing to become hypnotic subjects. Communications should be sent to the Secretary, Richard Hodgson, 5 Boylston place, Boston, Mass.

C. B. CORY,
Chairman.

4. Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena.

This committee is chiefly concerned with the experimental investigation of the phenomena commonly described as "spiritualistic," and is particularly desirous of obtaining opportunities for investigation with private and unpaid "mediums," or other persons in whose presence "mediumistic" phenomena occur. Under this head we place table-tippings or movements of other objects, automatic writing, as by planchette or otherwise, voices, unexplained noises, lights, and cognate phenomena. Private persons who themselves experience such phenomena are earnestly requested to communicate accounts of them to the committee, the members of which would be especially grateful for opportunities of witnessing personally the occurrences described. The committee will further be glad to investigate any phenomena of similar character alleged to occur in the presence of professional mediums, when these can be submitted to a scientific scrutiny. Communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Richard Hodgson, 5 Boylston place, Boston, Mass.

WILLIAM N. BULLARD,
Chairman.

5. Committee on Experimental Psychology.

This committee is at present desirous of testing the feasibility of making some successful investigations in folk-thought or the study of sociology in its psychological aspects. It seeks to ascertain not so much the psychical peculiarities exhibited by individuals *quâ* individuals, as the psychical characteristics which many individuals may possess in common in virtue of their being members of particular races

or communities. There are many beliefs and habits of thought by which one nation is distinguished from another, and the people of one epoch from those of earlier and later epochs. How far these are due to heredity, how far to simple tradition, how far to transient circumstances of time, and place, and social opinion, how far to the deliberate and rational judgments of the individuals themselves, — what are their causes, and what positions should be assigned to them as regards development or degeneration, are inquiries the prosecution of which the committee trusts will lead to results of the utmost importance. Such results, however, must not be looked for at once. It is clear that, before any reliable generalizations can be reached, much laborious gathering of facts will be needed.

The method which the committee wishes to adopt is to accumulate data from individuals, and by comparison of them with one another ascertain the degree of similarity of mental habit existing between the individuals concerned. To test the method, the committee has selected two subjects intimately connected with other work of the Society, namely, diagram drawing and the prevalence of superstitions. As in this part of the researches of the Society a very wide-spread coöperation is absolutely necessary for the achievement of results of scientific value, it is hoped that the members and associates will not only universally respond themselves, but also induce large numbers of their friends to respond to this appeal.

You are requested: —

1. To draw ten figures on the accompanying postal-card to be returned to the Secretary, the drawings to be made without any suggestion received from any other person.
2. To answer *Yes* or *No* to all the questions on the accompanying BLANK F.

CHARLES S. MINOT.
Chairman.

It is hoped eventually to found a library for the use of members of the Society. Contributions of books on psychical subjects should be sent to the Secretary.

It is also hoped that voluntary donations to the Society will enable the Council to issue a monthly journal, which shall be circulated gratuitously among members and associates. The object of this journal will be to give information of the business transacted at the meetings of the council, and of the progress made by the various committees, and to furnish to our members early records of matters of interest which would otherwise be delayed till the next publication of the *Proceedings*. The journal, as contemplated, will be open to

correspondence and discussion by members and associates. Pecuniary contributions towards the establishment of the journal will be gratefully received.

Any information or suggestions as to the work of the Society will be gladly welcomed by the council.

All communications or applications for information should be addressed to the Secretary, Richard Hodgson, 5 Boylston Place, Boston, Mass.

(Signed by the Executive Committee on behalf of the Council),

H. P. BOWDITCH,
E. G. GARDINER,
C. S. MINOT.

The Council specially requests prompt payment from any members and associates who are in arrears with their subscriptions.

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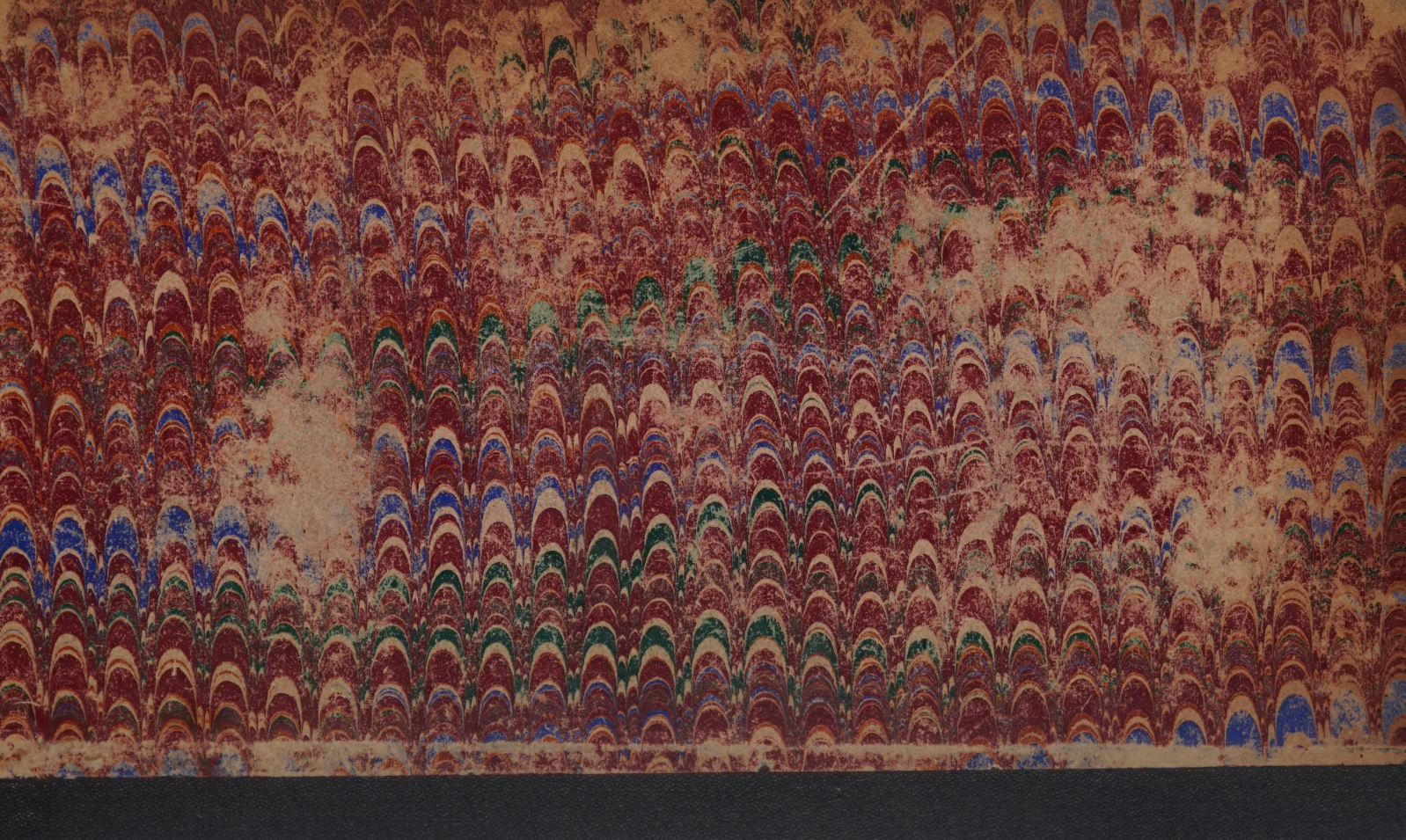
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